



LOCAL NEWS

# Portraits of the Past: Federal report spurred fear of satanic cult connection to cattle mutilations



Carl Whiteside of the Colorado Bureau of Investigation led the...



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Denver Post photo

Carl Whiteside of the Colorado Bureau of Investigation led the investigation into cattle mutilations in Colorado in 1975.



By [COMMUNITY HISTORY WRITERS](#) and [SPECIAL TO THE TIMES](#) |





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*Editor's Note: This series is part of the monthly contributions to the Fort Morgan Times by the Community History Writers, a group of area individuals committed to documenting and writing about local history and the people, places and happenings that created the various communities within Morgan County.*

*At the beginning of September 1975, the Brush Banner announced that it had received long-distance telephone threats from a person or persons who told the paper to "lay off the investigation of the cattle mutilations."*

*Senator Floyd Haskell then contacted the FBI to investigate these threats. He informed the FBI that Brush Banner publisher/editor Dane Edwards had told him that U.S. Army helicopters had been sighted in the vicinity of some cattle mutilations.*

*On Aug. 22, the Brush Banner turned over all of its findings to the CBI. The Banner assured its readers that it would continue its investigative reporting. However, in order to protect their findings, all of their notes were sent to Denver for safe keeping.*

### **Logan County mutilations escalate**

*Over the Labor Day weekend in 1975, the number of cattle mutilations in Logan County rose to nine and numerous helicopters were sighted flying over the area.*

*So the Logan County Board of County Commissioners sent a letter to Gov. Lamm asking for assistance from the Colorado Air National Guard.*

*By the end of the month, when a bull was mutilated outside Willard, the total number of mutilations in Logan county had grown to 25.*

*The Sterling Journal Advocate reported that the veterinary scientists at CSU examined 16*

*carcasses and determined that five of these had been mutilated by humans. All five had died of natural causes such as pneumonia, brain disease or blood poisoning and had been mutilated after dying.*

*The vets in charge of the exams pointed out that the number of cattle that had been “mutilated” fell well within the range of what was expected for average cattle deaths. Ranchers can expect to lose 2 percent of their herd each year to either disease or the weather. So, in 1975 the expected loss was predicted to be 37,000. By the middle of September, there had been 130 mutilations reported on the Colorado Plains, so why was there such a panic over this relatively small number of dead cows?*

### ***Satanic cult connection***

*Ranchers were afraid that humans would be the next victims of the satanic cults. Where did this fear originate?*

*Even though investigators like Carl Whiteside of the CBI called for calmness and rationality, rumors kept spreading, mostly due to a 12-page report written that past spring by an agent working for the U.S. Treasury Department’s Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Division. His name was Donald E. Flickinger.*

*Flickinger had been contacted by a well-known UFO expert who had received a letter from an inmate at Fort Leavenworth. His name was Kenneth Bankston, and although he said he wasn’t a member of a cult, he had information about one. He was transferred to a jail in Minnesota, where Flickinger interrogated him for a month.*

*Bankston told a story of a satanic cult in Texas called “The Sons of Satan,” whose purpose was to create “hell on earth.” This large, wealthy cult was led by a right-wing, white supremacist leader called “Howard.” The cult was focused on animal sacrifices, but human sacrifices were their ultimate goal.*

*Bankston described the cattle mutilation process this way: First the cow was shot with a tranquilizer pellet. Then the members would walk up to the cow without leaving tracks by using large pieces of cardboard. They didn’t want to leave tracks because they wanted the public to believe that UFO’s were involved in the mutilations. If there was snow on the ground, they’d use blow torches to create a circle around the cattle. When they got close enough to the cow, they would place a stimulant, like amyl nitrate, against its nose in order to speed up its bodily functions. Then they used veterinary syringes to withdraw all of the blood. Finally they would cut out all of the body parts and organs they wanted to use in their sacrificial rituals.*

*Based on the information provided by this inmate, U.S. Attorney Robert Renner of Minneapolis ordered a full investigation.*

### ***Second inmate speaks***

*Bankston said the federal agents could get additional information if they talked to Dan Dugan, another inmate who was an ex-member of the cult.*

*So Dugan was transferred out of the high-security Texas prison he was serving time in. The two inmates were kept apart, and when they were interrogated the investigators tried to trip them up with false information, but they passed the test. Both of the inmates told identical stories. Dugan provided additional information that greatly concerned the investigators. He said that he'd been part of a human sacrifice that had occurred in Cozad, Nebraska, earlier in 1965. He said that four teenage campers were encountered by chance by the cult. The cult members shot the teenagers with their tranquilizers and all four boys died of apparent overdoses. Then the members of the cult cut their corpses up and sacrificed their body parts to Satan. The remains of their bodies were placed in burlap sacks, and Dugan believed they had been buried in a nearby gravel pit. The investigators contacted law enforcement in Cozad and a search was undertaken, but no bones were found.*

### **Story taken seriously**

*Bankston and Dugan also provided Flickinger with a list of 14 people who they said were involved in the cult. When Flickinger gave these names to other law enforcement officials, he found out that many of them were already being investigated for possible links to satanic cults and other criminal behavior.*

*The whole story was taken seriously by the federal government, so several satanic organizations across the country were investigated, including some in Denver.*

*Dugan, in particular, seemed credible because of his obvious fear of the cult.*

*In addition, the feds were greatly concerned about a "hit list" provided to them by Bankston and Dugan. It included the names of prominent, liberal politicians, including Herbert Humphrey, whom the cult were planning to assassinate.*

*Flickinger admitted that it was possible that the two inmates had "concocted a fantastic, bizarre and grisly story, which is too complicated that they could never be proven liars."*

*Yet, this was soon after the Manson Family murders, so no one wanted to take any chances.*

*Flickinger appeared on some television talk shows, and he reported that he'd received several death threats and that blood had been smeared on his front door.*

*On May 31, 1975, Bankston escaped from jail and was quickly recaptured. The next day, Dugan, who was now in a small jail in Texas, escaped and was caught a month later during a holdup in Glenwood Springs, Colorado. Both claimed that they'd jumped jail out of fear of retaliation from the satanists.*

### **Just a hoax?**

*By the end of spring 1975, U.S. Attorney Renner said that the inquiry had been closed after it failed to find any evidence linking "nuts and occult groups" to cattle mutilations.*

*Apparently, the escape of both inmates convinced the officials that the whole thing had been a hoax. Also, the investigators learned that "Howard," the leader of the cult, had been incarcerated the whole time he was supposedly roaming the country, mutilating cattle and people.*

*"Once a belief has been sanctioned by powerful groups, widely disseminated, and reinforced by frequent airing in the media, it may take on the status of truism," states "Raising the Devil: New Religions and the Media" by Bob Ellis. that appeared to be what was happening, from the federal agents' perspective.*

**Next in the series:** *Colorado investigation continues.*

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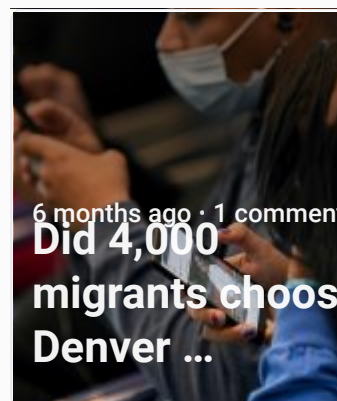


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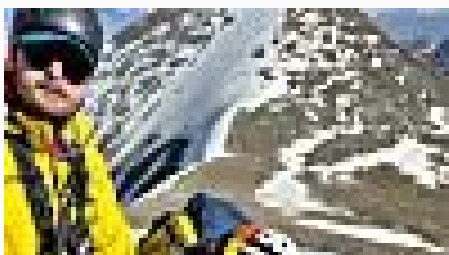


## TRENDING NATIONALLY

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- 1** 'Massive undertaking' continues in Bucks County to find children washed away by flooding, family identified
- 2** Tossing an old license plate in the trash landed this Colorado lawyer in jail for a theft he didn't commit
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Taboola Feed



Rescue group saves dog that



Weld County Commissioner



Arapahoe County Sheriff

## **fell 600 feet from Colorado 14er**

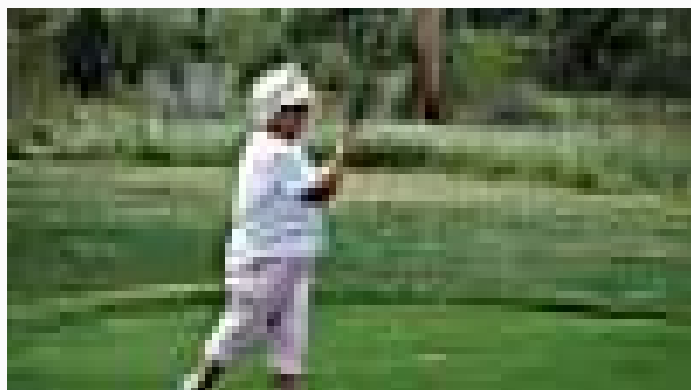
When Alpine Rescue Team responded to a call around 1 p.m...

## **Scott James announces bid for U.S. House**

Weld County Commissioner Scott James announced Wednesday

## **obtains arrest warrant for father suspected of**

Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office investigators obtained an arrest



## **Morgan County Golf Association presents Sunday Funday golf scramble**

It's summertime and the living is easy, especially when golf turns an ordinary Sunday...



## **Train strikes, kills man walking on tracks in north Greeley**

Police suspect the man was walking the train tracks and did not react to the oncoming train



## **Brush City Council denies right-of-way vacation; will work with property owners**

An item regarding whether to approve a vacation of a public ...



## **Thunderstorm could deliver 3-inch hail to plains**

UPDATE: 5:32 p.m. At 5:26 p.m., a severe thunderstorm was located



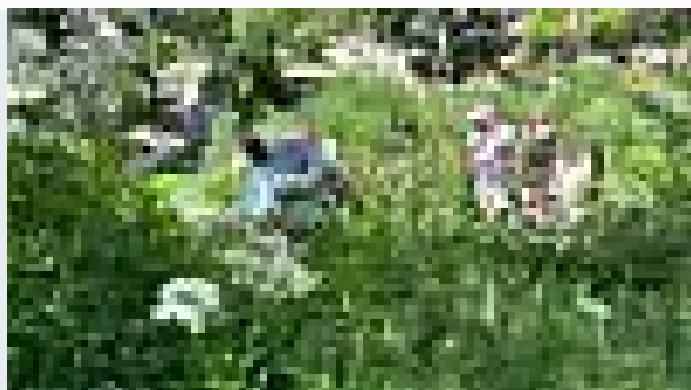
## **Former Morgan County Deputy sentenced to 90 days in jail, five years probation**

On Friday, Former Morgan County Deputy Sheriff Luke Davis of



## **It's rained more in Denver by now than it normally does all year, with more likely**

It rained more in Denver by July 4 than it



## **Two places to see incredible wildflower blooms in Colorado this weekend**

Something beautiful and unusual is happening in the southern part of the state this summer.



### Fort Morgan Police Department and Weld County SWAT recover...

A press release by the Fort Morgan Police Department was ...



### Note from the Publisher: Changes coming to Times print frequency

Dear Valued Reader, Effective July 10, the Monday and Tuesday



### Firefighters mobilizing in wilderness to suppress 50-acre Devil's Thumb fire, one

Firefighters with air support were preparing to suppress a blaze

## MORE IN NEWS



### Partnership makes Morgan County Fair a picnic

At respites, patients are treated like guests, proponents say, and can feel heard and keep their dignity without having to relinquish their clothes and other belongings.

Man takes a nap on a park bench.

### Mayo Clinic Q&A: Is there a wrong way — or time — to nap?

A woman drinks from a water bottle.

**Mental health respite facilities are filling care gaps in over a dozen states**

**Mayo Clinic Minute: Where is the kidney stone belt?**

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